KURO HAKUSHAKU WA HOSHI O MEDERU 16

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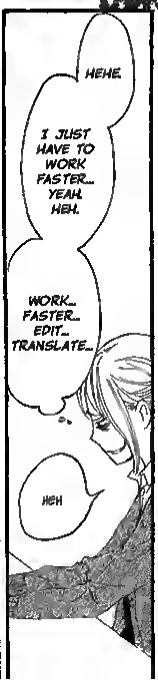

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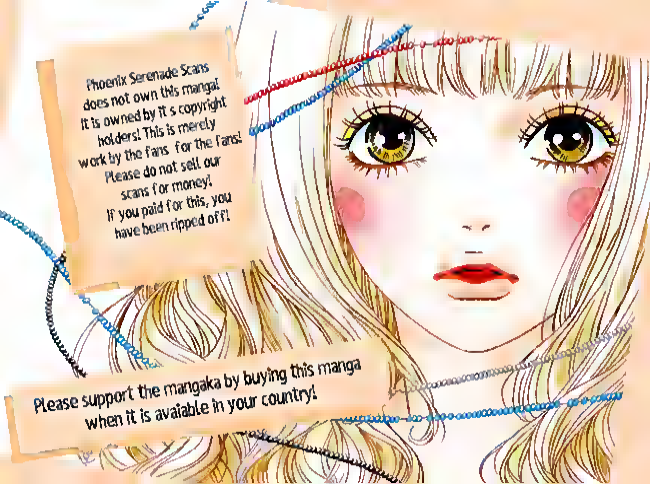
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Episode.16

Several weeks passed
since I escaped from the domain of Count Valentine.
YOUR BURNS HAVE HEALED QUITE WELL, HAVEN'T THEY?
UH-HUH...
I'M SORRY, MEG
I'M A TOTAL STRANGER TO YOU AND YET I'M MAKING YOU DO THIS...

THEN, IF YOU'RE EVER IN TROUBLE...
I'LL BE SURE TO HELP YOU
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE, I AM IN TROUBLE
HEH WELL I'M GLAD
AREN'T YOU HAPPY TOO, ESTHER?
ESTHER ?
JOHN...
YOUR SHOULDER... DOES IT STILL HURT?

Esther was afraid and very worried because of my burns, but...
IT'S ALRIGHT, COME OVER HERE...
WELL...
A LITTLE...
I truly had no intention of taking away her smile.
Like a puppy...
I DON'T KNOW WHO THIS JOHN IS...
But, above all...
I kept thinking how I didn't want to show an innocent girl such an abominable scar.
FROM NOW ON, I SHOULDN'T UNDRESS IN FRONT OF ESTHER

...HUH, WHAT'S THAT?
GAH
THERE'S SOMETHING UNDER YOUR HAIR JOHN.
SLAP
N-NO THERE ISN'T!
?
YOU'RE MISTAKEN!
JOHN.
SHH!
COME OVER HERE FOR A BIT!
secretly
FOR THE MOST PART, EVERYONE WAS OUT TODAY.
SO I DON'T THINK ANYONE NOTICED.
I'M TAKING IT OFF.
WHISH

MY_
WHAT A PRETTY BLOND...
BUT IT'S DISHEVELED
SCRAPE
MY FOOTMAN TOLD ME TO DISGUISE MYSELF... THEN CUT IT OFF WITH A KNIFE
WELL... HE WAS VERY SKILLED!
IT HAS GROWN OUT A BIT...
I'LL CUT IT FOR YOU SO IT DOESN'T STICK OUT OF THE WIG
ぽんPAT ぽんPAT
...MEG,
YOU NOTICED I WAS WEARING A WIG, HUH

YOU WERE WEARING A WELL-TAILORED COAT AND HAD A CONCEALED SILVER KNIFE WITH...
...THE WINTERSON HOUSE CREST SET INTO IT.
YOU LET SUCH A SUSPICIOUS GUY INTO YOUR HOUSE...
WHY DIDN'T YOU ASK ME ANY-THING?
snip
snip
IT WAS WHEN I WAS TREATING YOU.
OH. YOU WEREN'T SUSPICIOUS AT ALL.
EVEN IF YOU WERE COVERED IN SOOT, THERE WAS AN AIR OF ELEGANCE ABOUT YOU.
ナズンドー

W-WHO ARE YOU...
HEY! IF YOU GET UP SO SUDDENLY LIKE THAT I MIGHT CUT OFF MORE THAN YOUR HAIR!
THUMP
AH!
HEAVY THUD
PLEASE RELAX. I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY
I MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS NOW, BUT BEFORE THE CHILDREN WERE BORN,
I WORKED AS A MAID IN A NOBLE'S MANSION
THAT'S WHY I KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT NOBLES
SMIRK
WHAT'S SOMEONE LIKE YOU DOING ON THE EAST END?
snip
snip
JUST LIKE YOU,
I HAVE MY REASONS
!

"Don't ask, don't tell"
It was something like that, wasn't it?
I SEE.
HEY JOHN, JOHN...
LET'S GO OUT FOR A WALK!
WELL, ALRIGHT BUT...
I'VE BEEN LYING IN BED ALL THIS TIME, SO I'M OUT OF SHAPE...
YAY!

I'm going to work and leaving them to you ok?
Heh. You really saved me some trouble there!
MEG ENTRUSTED ME WITH BOTH OF YOU SO...
DON'T GET SEPARATED NOW
AL, TOO. GIVE ME YOUR HAND
I'M FINE
ズキ
THROB
The truth is
I hesitated a little before going outside.

I know
They don't walk about in broad daylight.
THROB
Still, even now
I fear they'll walk out of that alleyway...
THROB
THROB
SOFTLY

DO YOUR BURNS HURT?
JOHN,
RELIEF
NO,
YOU'RE SHAKING.
TUG
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO AFRAID.
I'M AL-
IT'S OK FOR YOU TO RELAX.
WE CAN SEE THEM SO.

WE CAN SEE WHAT YOU'RE AFRAID OF
...NO
IT'S NOT LIKE... I WAS AFRAID OR ANYTHING...
WHEN YOU SAY YOU CAN SEE THEM...
UH... GHOSTS... WAS IT?
JOHN, ARE YOU AFRAID OF GHOSTS!?
?
PROTECT ME, HUH...
IT'LL BE ALRIGHT!
DOO
SHAKE
SHAKE
BECAUSE I'LL PROTECT YOU, OK?

Bwa...
A HA HA HA
This was the first time
PITTER
PATTER
RUMBLE
pouring rain
I had laughed since that night.
John laughed!
YOU'RE SUCH AN IDIOT ESTHER
YOU'RE THE ONE BEING LAUGHED AT

THE WEATHER WAS SO NICE DURING THE DAY, AND YET...
I WONDER IF MEG WILL BE ALRIGHT.
IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'S RUNNING LATE TONIGHT.
SHUT
I WONDER IF I SHOULD GO AHEAD AND...
GO TO SLEEP?
ESTHER?
ESTHER IS AFRAID OF THUNDER
IT'S GOING TO BE TROUBLESOME IF SHE NEVER GROWS UP.
YOU'RE NOT VERY GROWN UP YOURSELF, ARE YOU?
EXCEPT THAT, UNLIKE ME, SHE ALWAYS SLEEPS WITH MOM.
FLASH

grin
IF YOU'RE AFRAID,
I DON'T MIND IF YOU TUCK IN WITH ME.
pfft
ESTHER,
tremble
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
REALLY?
TOUCH
...PLUS, DURING THE DAY,
I WAS STARTING TO FEEL GUILTY.
YOU'VE ALWAYS LET ME USE THIS BED AS IF IT WERE MY OWN.
IT'S PRETTY CRAMPED, ARE YOU SURE IT'S OK?

YOU PROTECTED ME FROM THE GHOSTS.
DURING THE NIGHT, I WILL
PROTECT YOU FROM THE THUNDER.

IT'S ALRIGHT.
...
PAT PAT
FLASH
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
WHEN I...
WHEN I GROW UP...
I'LL BE YOUR BRIDE!
SO WARM ...
...Why, I wonder.
YUP!
HAHA, I SEE.
DON'T YOU KNOW WE'RE COMMONERS?
THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD MARRY HIM
DUMB ESTHER.

Ever since that night, whenever I jumped out of bed from a nightmare,
Or even when a faint sound opened my eyes
That night, even amidst the thunder, I was able to sleep peacefully.
As if being guided by Esther's warmth
GIGGLE
OH MY!
JOHN'S SLEEPING QUITE WELL TONIGHT, ISN'T HE?
That's right.
Just when it seemed that an empty heart had been filled with warmth, on the next day...
NOW THAT THEY'VE COME TO GET ALONG SO WELL,
SAYING FAREWELL WILL BE EVEN MORE PAINFUL

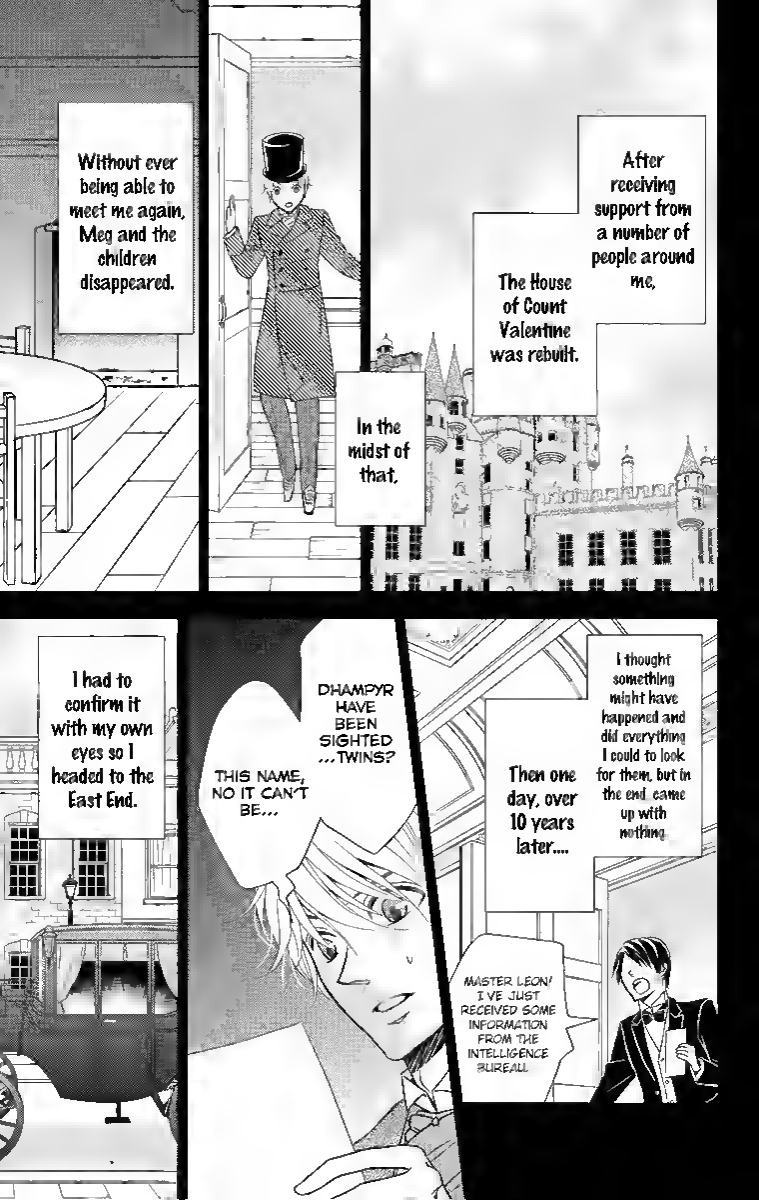
Parting always comes suddenly...
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
COMING...
YOU'RE MRS. MAYFIELD, NO?
When I asked
NOAH!?
THUMP
I BELIEVE THAT OUR MASTER HAS COME TO BE IN YOUR DEBT.
MY NAME IS NOAH LANCASTER.
It seems that, ever since we escaped to London after the night we were attacked by vampires,

Noah, my footman at the time, had spent
several weeks searching high and low for me.
THE MANSION SUFFERED SOME DAMAGE FROM THE FIRE BUT REPAIR IS POSSIBLE.
NOW THAT THE MASTER HAS DIED, THE TITLE OF COUNT WILL PASS ONTO YOU, MASTER LEON
YOU'D LIKE A KNOW-NOTHING KID LIKE ME TO BECOME COUNT?
I'M ABOUT RE. DY TO LAUGH.
PLEASE, SOMEHOW, LET US REBUILD THE HOUSE OF COUNT VALENTINE.
MASTER LEON. ALL OF US PLACE OUR TRUST IN YOUR WISDOM
?
?
...

THUMP
...I SEE.
I GUESS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ONE SURVIVES IN DISGRACE.
LET US RETURN, NOAH.
TO THE MANSION WE WERE MEANT TO LIVE IN.
C'MON NOW, ESTHER.
...NO.
JOHN.
BE WELL,
SOMEDAY, WITHOUT FAIL, I WILL RETURN YOUR KINDNESS.
I AM TRULY GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN IN YOUR CARE.
... WELL THEN

I DON'T WANT YOU TO GO.
JOHN.
I WANT YOU TO STAY WITH ME LONGER.
BECAUSE I, ALMOST CERTAINLY, WILL COME FOR YOU.
ESTHER
WE'LL MEET AGAIN
WHEN THAT TIME COMES,
CALL ME BY MY REAL NAME.

JOHN...
EH...?
HAVE YOU MADE UP YOUR MIND?
JOHN!
YES,
OF COURSE.


Without ever being able to meet me again, Meg and the children disappeared.
In the midst of that,
The House of Count Valentine was rebuilt.
After receiving support from a number of people around me,
I thought something might have happened and did everything I could to look for them, but in the end, came up with nothing.
Then one day, over 10 years later....
MASTER LEON! I'VE JUST RECEIVED SOME INFORMATION FROM THE INTELLIGENCE BUREAU.
DHAMPYR HAVE BEEN SIGHTED ...TWINS?
THIS NAME, NO IT CAN'T BE....
I had to confirm it with my own eyes so I headed to the East End.

There,
I saw you, shining as brightly as when we first met.
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME FLOWERS, SIR?
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
However, having lost Meg and Al
Sometimes, your expression would twist in pain. My heart ached as I saw it.

Then, one night,
I saw your teary eyes as you ran from a vampire.
Amidst the social season, anytime I wasn't working, I made frequent visits to the East End.
Given that the lifestyle of a Dhampyr remained shrouded in mystery, for the time, I followed the wishes of the family and began to observe you
OF COURSE.
KEEPING HER UNDER WATCH?
AGAIN, YOU'RE STAL...
The next morning
I could no longer
stand on the sidelines.
I came for you.
I tried teasing you a little, and yet,
You didn't remember me at all!
That wasn't surprising considering you were very young back then, hurt

You know, Esther,
Ever since the time we first met,
I have done nothing but take from you.
You called me
by my real name.
Despite that,
You came with me.
To become my wife...
To become the lady of the house...

TO BE CONTINUED